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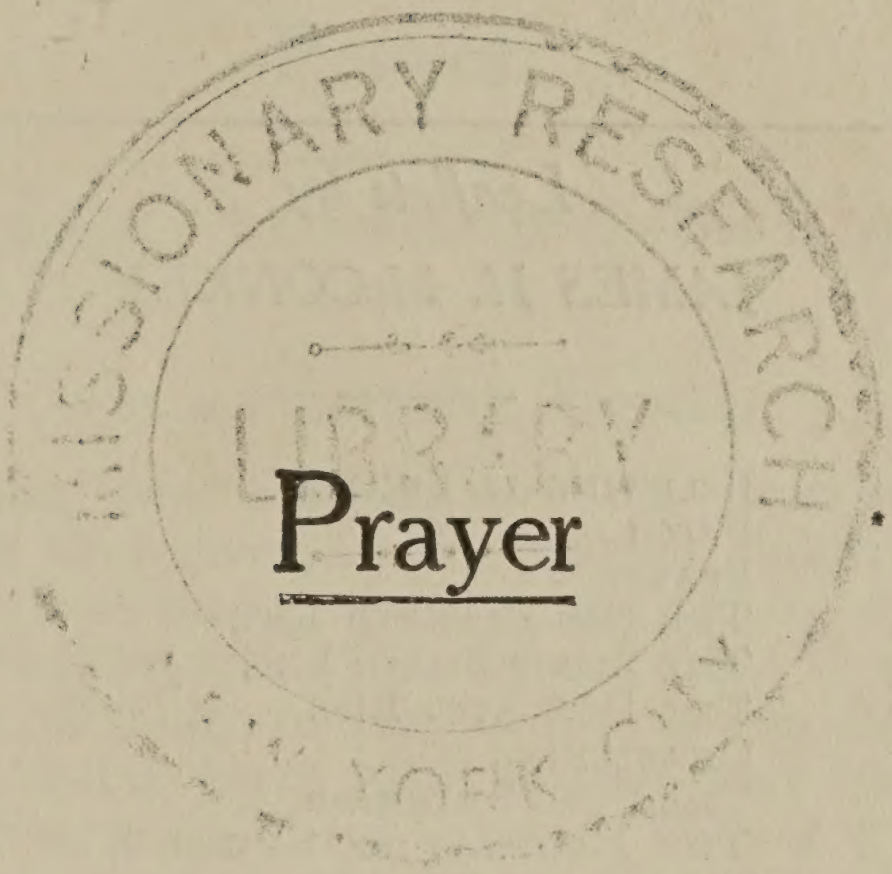

Prayer

James H. McConkey

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Prayer.

"IF YE ASK * * * I WILL DO." (Jno. 14:14.)

* * *

IT IS A WONDERFUL *Promise.*

Many and precious are the promises which God gives to His praying children. He tells us that as we pray and receive our joy shall be full, (Jno. 16:24); that if we bring all things to Him in prayer His own unspeakable peace shall possess and keep our hearts in Christ Jesus, (Phil. 4:7) that of all who ask from Him not one shall be turned away; that to any who knock at His door it shall without fail be opened, (Matt. 7, 7:8). Familiar enough and gracious too is His truth that as we ask He *gives.* So says His Word again and again: "Ask and it shall *be given* you;" "Every one that asketh *receiveth;*" "How much more will your heavenly Father *give* good things to them that ask Him." But in the heart of this great chapter, the fourteenth of John, we come upon the greatest prom-

ise God has ever given to His praying children. Presuming—as we do in all that is said in these opening chapters concerning prayer—that the child of God is asking in His name, or according to His will, the wondrous statement is here twice made that not only as we pray does God give, but that

AS WE PRAY GOD WORKS.

God, the eternal God of the universe, stands, as it were, like an almighty servant and says: "If you, my child, will only *pray* I will *work;* if you will only be busy with *asking* I will see to the *doing.*" Not only does He bestow at our cry, but He *acts.* Not only does our praying evoke His bounty, it sets in motion His omnipotence. Wherefore, as we enter into the secret chamber of prayer, nothing will so stir us to mighty intercession, nothing will so soon make us master-pleaders with God for a lost world, as to whisper to our own soul, again and again, this wonderful truth, *"While I am praying* GOD *is really* DOING *that which I am asking!"*

Thus to a child of God bowed in prayer that the gospel may be sent to the dark lands, though he may not see it, yet as he

prays *God* baffles the powers of darkness; as he prays *God* moves the hearts of kings; as he prays *God* breaks down the barriers to evangelization; as he prays *God* loosens the bands of superstition; as he prays *God* opens up the pathways to forbidden lands; as he prays *God* unclasps the purses of His children; as he prays *God* raises up and thrusts forth the gospel messengers to the whitened harvests. As *he* is *praying* GOD IS DOING. This is explicitly asserted. "Search my word, says our Lord. Find out clearly in it what my will is concerning the world. Pray according to that will. Then as you pray "Lord thrust forth laborers into the harvest," I THRUST THEM FORTH! As you pray "Lord break down the obstacles," I BREAK THEM DOWN! As you pray "Lord stir men's hearts to give," I STIR THEM! Whatsoever ye *ask* in my name, I DO." Beloved, what a tremendous responsibility is ours! What a unique privilege! That all the power of an omnipotent God is ready and waiting to be put into triumphant, irresistible action at the prayer of one of His children! That the very hosts of heaven are marshalled against the powers of darkness at that importunate call of yours which is according to the will of God! He

declares that all power in heaven and earth is His, and then, as it were, places Himself at our disposal and says, "Now my child *you pray* and *I* will *work*; you *ask* and *I* will *do*." As an engineer might suffer a child powerless in itself, to call forth power, not its own, by opening the throttle of his great machine, so God says to us weaklings, "all power is mine, but unto you it is given to call it forth by prayer." *If it be true, then, that God's omnipotence is placed at our disposal, we are as responsible for its exercise through prayer as though we possessed it ourselves.* Behold here the shame of an unevangelized world, of two thousand years delay, of our cowardice and faltering in the presence of difficulties. For though *we* have had no power to do, yet the mighty God, linking Himself with us as a real yoke-fellow and co-worker, has said

"IF YE ASK I WILL DO."

* * * * *

It is a promise by AN OMNIPOTENT DOER.

They who are charged with the erection of costly public or private buildings count it a rare privilege to have a great artist

offer his services. They seek to employ the greatest architect, the most famous painter, the most skillful sculptor to do their work. But who is it here who offers to *do* for us, if we will only *ask?* It is no untried apprentice, no bungling worker accustomed to failure. It is GOD HIMSELF. It is the mightiest doer in the universe who says "I will do, if you *ask.*" Unrivalled wisdom, boundless skill, limitless power, infinite resources are His. Think a moment who it is that promises. He who shrouded the land of Egypt in awful darkness; He who turned her streams of water to streams of blood; He who laid His hand upon her first-born and filled her borders with mourning; He who broke the stubborn will of her impious king; He who led forth His people Israel, with mighty arm and outstretched hand; He who parted the great sea, and made the glassy walls of water to be bulwarks of safety to them, and swift avalanches of death to their pursuing foes; He who, when His children cried for water, sweetened the bitter wells to quench their thirst; He who, when they hungered sent them bread from heaven; He who, when they marched about Jericho in utter self-helplessness, leveled its towering walls by

the word of His power; He who walked with His three children in the fierce, fiery furnace, yet kept them even from the smell of scorching garments; He who stilled the tempest, walked on the seas, cast out devils, healed the living and raised the dead—it is *this* same mighty *does* who says He will do for *me,* if I *ask!* This omnipotence is the very same omnipotence whose doing is awaiting my praying!

Yea the God who holds the sea in the hollow of His hand; the God who swings this ponderous globe of earth in its orbit more easily than you could swing a child's toy rubber ball; the God who marshals the stars and guides the planets in their blazing paths with undeviating accuracy; the God of Sinai, and of Horeb; the heaven-creating, devil-conquering, dead-raising God,—it is this very God who says to you and to me:

IF YE ASK I WILL DO.

* * *

It is a promise which shows how much more wonderful than OUR *doing is* HIS *doing called forth by* OUR ASKING.

You can at will close your eyes and, in

vision, call up before you the men and women whom you love yet know to be lost. Friend after friend has wrought with and entreated them: you yourself would almost be willing to be anathema for them, if so be they might be saved: but all has been in vain. Suppose now there came some day a message from the Lord Jesus Christ promising that if you would but ask, He himself would go to these unsaved ones and deal directly with them. What an unheard of privilege would you count it to have Jesus Christ himself deal in person with a soul you loved! To have Jesus Christ work—not indeed in the body but in the Spirit—in your home, your church, your community; to have Jesus Christ give secret messages to your lost loved ones: to have Jesus Christ speak, woo, and win, as none else could: to have Jesus Christ with all His tact, wisdom, winsomeness, patience, gentleness, and compassion following on with unwearied zeal and tenderest love to bring back to God that soul for whom He had died:—what a promise! And yet this is exactly what prayer will accomplish, for He explicitly says, "If ye *ask I* will *do*."

Think a moment of that unsaved loved-one for whom all these years *you* have been

doing. You have pleaded, argued, and expostulated in vain. You have preached Christ, you have tried to live Christ. You have exhausted every device and means that love, faith, or hope could conceive. Now that all *your* doing has failed how wondrous it would be into that life to bring HIS doing through your ASKING.

Hear Him speak: "My child *you* know not how to convict of sin, but *I*, who work as you pray, can bow down that soul in a very agony of conviction. *You* know not when to woo, and when to reprove, but *I*, who work as you ask, know just when to pour in the balm of love, and when to let fall the sharp, quick blow of needed judgment. *You* cannot follow a soul in daily, unbroken pursuit, for you are finite and must eat, rest, and sleep, but *I*, who do as you ask, follow that soul day and night, with sleepless vigilance, through every second of his existence. Now comforting, now troubling; now giving darkness, now light; now sending prosperity, now adversity; now using the knife, now the healing balm; chastening, troubling; bereaving, blessing; bending, breaking, making, yea, *I* can do all things needful to be done to bring that wanderer to himself and cause

him to cry I will arise and go unto my Father."

What a message, too, is this for God's children who, through years of pain and affliction as invalids and "shut-ins," have mourned because cut off from the active service in which others are busy for God. Beloved sufferers be comforted. Blessed as is the ministry of *doing,* there is no higher, holier calling under heaven than that *asking* which calls forth *God's doing* in the lives of others. Your Master Jesus Christ, through every second of His eternal, heavenly life, is pouring out His soul in *unceasing asking* (*"He ever liveth to make intercession."*) What an honor that God should call you to that same eternal ministry to which His great Son now unceasingly gives Himself! Covet no other if this be thine. To enter into a needy life with your own doing is indeed precious, but to have God enter it through your *asking,* is it not greater by so much as God's doing is greater than thine? Hear Him speak to you. "O child of mine, laid upon a bed of helplessness and suffering, cease to repine because thou can'st not busy thyself with thine own doing, as others. For I tell thee that as in the silence of the night watches thou dost

cry unto me for a lost world, I am DOING what of my will thou art *asking*. Wouldst thou not rather call forth mine omnipotent doing by thine asking if to this I have called thee, than even to be busy with thine own doing? For if THOU shalt ASK (according to my will) I will DO." And let your glad answer be, "Lord I rejoice. Though, shut within these four walls, I cannot touch men yet Thou who hast promised to do for me, wilt touch and quicken them if I but ask. Though I am all the day weary and helpless yet Thou, who hast promised to do for me, art in Thy doing tireless and omnipotent. Though I cannot raise a hand nor stir a foot yet Thou, who hast promised to do if I ask, wilt move heaven and earth to bless those for whom I pray. Though my human asking must soon end with my passing away, yet Thy mighty doing, called forth by my asking, will go on through all time, yea through eternity itself. Yea Lord since I can pray down *Thy* mighty doing into the lives I love, shall I longer mourn because I am shut out from *my* doing? What though *I* can not do if Thou who dost work at my asking can do *miracles?* So Lord, though I can do nothing, help me to re-

member with new joy and hope thy blessed promise.

IF YE ASK I WILL DO.

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It is a promise for OUR SERVICE.

Concerning those things that only God can do we naturally betake ourselves to prayer. For knowing that we ourselves cannot do them, we find our hope only in that asking which brings God's doing. But let us remember, too, that our own personal service, in the things which *we can* do, needs also that asking which will bring GOD'S doing into it. Do we realize that every thing we do needs to be saturated with the spirit of prayer that *God* may be the real doer, the real worker in the things which we are busily doing? Yet this is a mighty truth: "If ye ask I will do" applies to your own service as well as your intercession for others.

Have you ever toyed with the key of a telegraph instrument while the circuit was closed? If so you have noted this fact. On that key you may write a complete mes-

sage, from address to signature. Upon it every telegraphic character may be perfectly formed; every condition of expert operating may be fulfilled. But it matters not how skillful an operator you are, so long as the electric circuit is closed, all your efforts are simply sounding brass and clattering platinum. Not a single spark of electric life do you transmit; not a single message of good or ill, of bane or blessing is conveyed to the waiting listener at the other end of the line. Why? *Because the battery is not working.* And all *your* working is effort without result, activity without power. But now you open the little brass lever which connects your key to the battery hidden beneath the table. Immediately every letter you form thrills with life, every word you write flashes a living message into the mind and heart of the far-away receiver. Through your work, dead and mechanical in itself, the electric battery is now pouring forth its vital stream, flooding with life and power every deft motion of your flying fingers.

The lesson is plain. It is in spiritual telegraphy as in material. If the battery is not working the message is mere clatter. *We* may *do,* but if *God* is not doing through

us then all our doing is naught. If we work in our own fleshly strength we will but effect fleshly results, for "whatsoever is born of the flesh *is* flesh." God alone is spiritual life. God is the only begetter of life. Our highest function as servants is to be transmitters of the life of God to others. Our highest doing is that in which God is doing through us. And how shall this be? Through PRAYER. Prayer connects you with the divine battery of life and power. Prayer puts you "in the Spirit," and "it is *the Spirit* that quickeneth." From the chamber of prayer you come forth to men with the unction, the subtle power, the thrill of God's own life upon you, and as you touch them in speech, deed, or prayer, "virtue goes forth from you," for then it is not you but GOD that worketh in you. As you keep asking God keeps doing. When you grow prayerless your deeds grow powerless. Lead no meeting without *asking* that God may be the real leader through you; speak no message without *asking* that He may speak through you; begin no work without *asking* that God may work through you. For

"IF YE ASK I WILL DO."

A copy of "The Three Fold Secret of the Holy Spirit," a book of 123 pages by the author of this leaflet, will be sent free to any one who will write to Silver Publishing Company, 1013 Bessemer Building, Pittsburgh, Pa.